

I48 COMMENTARY ON MACAULAY'S
HISTORY

26,000 in 1698. And besides this there were in 1698 about 3,000 marines.¹ Taking either basis of comparison, it is clear that in the space of fifteen years a little army which was merely sufficient to keep the peace at home developed into one strong enough, if skilfully used, to determine the fate of a European war. In his reflections on the capture of Namur, Macaulay points out the significance of the change.

During several generations our ancestors had achieved nothing considerable by land against foreign enemies. We had indeed occasionally furnished to our allies small bands of auxiliaries who had well maintained the honour of the nation. But from the day on which the two Talbots, father and son, had perished in the vain attempt to reconquer Guienne, till the Revolution, there had been on the Continent no campaign in which Englishmen had borne a principal part. At length our ancestors had again, after an interval of near two centuries and a half, begun to dispute with the warriors of France the palm of military prowess.²

Any author who undertakes to narrate the growth of the army must note the origin of the different regiments comprising it, and their successive incorporation in it. Macaulay does not fail to do this, and by devoting a few words to their history seeks to show the descent of existing regi-

ments and to link the army of the
seventeenth century to
that of the nineteenth. Mr. Fortescue in his
History of the
British Army designates by their modern
numbers old
regiments which still survive. But it was not
usual to do
this when Macaulay wrote, and it was not so
easy. No
good account of the early history of the army
existed, and
Mr. Dalton's invaluable Army Lists had not
been pub-

¹ VI, 2748 (xxiii).

² V, 2536-8 (xxi).